

# The Commoner.

WILLIAM J. BRYAN, EDITOR AND PROPRIETOR.

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## PRES. ELIOT AND LABOR

President Eliot's eulogy of the non-union strike breaker has called forth the condemnation of the federation of labor, and excited criticism from all quarters. The first question to be decided is whether organization among laboring men is desirable. Those who say that it is, can point to the reforms which have been brought about through the various labor organizations. The secret ballot, arbitration, the lessening of the hours of labor, legislation against child labor, the increase of wages, the better protection and the sanitation of mines and factories, and the discussion among laboring men of economic, social and political questions—these are some of the things that the labor organization has accomplished.

But for the organization the condition of the wage-earner today would be very much worse than it is now; without the labor organization it would be difficult to imagine the condition of labor a few years hence. The labor organization has not only helped its members, but it has helped those outside of its ranks, for they also have shared in the general amelioration of conditions. There is no doubt that non-union men have by their votes helped to secure the reforms for which the labor organizations have contended, but without the labor organization to give direction and leadership little could have been accomplished.

It is not sufficient to say that the members of labor organizations are not perfect, or that the organizations make mistakes. It is not sufficient to say that strikes have sometimes been ordered upon insufficient ground, or that strikes have sometimes failed to accomplish their purposes, the members of the organization therefore suffering loss. This is simply saying that laboring men, like all others, are liable to err. The labor organization does not advise or encourage violence, and if violence is committed by individual members it is no more fair to charge it up to the organization than to charge the sins of a church member to the religious organization to which he belongs.

President Eliot can better employ his time attempting to improve and perfect the labor organization than in praising those who attempt to destroy its usefulness. It will be unfortunate for the country if the students of President Eliot are alienated in sympathy from the struggling masses upon whom the strength of the nation must finally rest in peace and in war.

## Gold Standard Logic.

It is astonishing to see what passes for argument in the gold standard papers, and nothing has been more astonishing than the comments that these papers have made on the recent decline in the price of silver. Is it ignorance or perversity that leads these editors to overlook the influence of legislation upon the white metal? The silver dollar was worth 3 cents more than the gold dollar when silver was demonetized in 1873. The Bland-Allison act aided silver some, but, as it did not take all of the silver on the market, the metal that could not secure a place for coinage contin-

ued to fall—but for the demand created by the Bland-Allison act, silver would have fallen still more rapidly during that period. In 1890 the Sherman law created a little larger demand for silver, and under the stimulus of this law silver rose to \$1.20 an ounce—within 9 cents of the coinage price. But when it was ascertained that even the Sherman law did not utilize all the annual product, silver again began to fall. The repeal of the Sherman law still further accentuated the decline, and the legislation now contemplated by congress is casting its shadow before it and influencing in advance the price of the metal. China is being blamed for the present decline, and the fact that she is compelled to pay so large an indemnity and has nothing but silver with which to pay may account, in part, for the recent decline, but American legislation is more responsible than anything else for the present position of silver.

## The Independent Press.

The Kansas City Journal, discussing Mr. Bryan's statement in regard to the growing independence of the dailies, says that "the daily newspaper is becoming less and less a blindly partisan paper, and there never was a time when the daily press was so little dominated by partisanship as now." That is the Journal's way of expressing it. The daily papers are quite independent when it comes to supporting a party policy, but they are not at all independent when it comes to attacking any wrong that is backed by capital. Aggregated wealth cannot demand anything so unjust or oppressive that it will not be supported by most of the great dailies, especially by those that claim to hold themselves aloof from party politics. The so-called independent papers are, if possible, more virulent and vicious than the straight-out republican papers in their denunciation of all who dare to array themselves against corporate greed and corporate domination.

## JEFFERSON MEMORIAL ASSOCIATION

An association has been organized called "The Jefferson Memorial Association," with Admiral George Dewey, president; Jesse B. Wilson, president of the Lincoln National bank, Washington, D. C., treasurer, and W. S. McKean, Stewart building, Washington, D. C., secretary. The object of the association is "to erect at the national capital a suitable memorial to the author of the Declaration of Independence." The editor of The Commoner has been appointed vice president for Nebraska. It is needless to say that The Commoner and its readers will take a lively interest in the success of the effort to perpetuate in the form of a monument the memory of the work of Thomas Jefferson, but his greatest and most enduring monument is the influence which his teachings have already had upon the world and the greater influence which they are destined to have.

The gentlemen who claim to be democrats, but who voted with the republicans when the democratic party stood for democratic principles, still continue to give advice to democrats that is warmly commended by the republican press.

## THE POPULIST MOVEMENT

The Morning Star of Rockford, Ill., has an editorial on "The Passing of Populism." Among other things it says:

"The populist movement was a great blow to the democratic party. It forced that party to proclaim itself in favor of policies that it opposed from its birth. It drove thousands of democrats into retirement or into the republican party. It scared capital and forced the business elements of the country to organize against the democratic party. It appealed to the spirit of unrest and rallied to the populist standard every ism of the hour. It challenged the opposition of every person who had become successful and the challenge was accepted. Under such auspices the populists while masquerading in democratic garments twice struggled for the presidency and each time was ingloriously beaten.

"Before the advent of the populist-silver craze the democratic party was a compact, well organized, ably led force. It held certain eastern states securely in its column and disputed the control of Illinois and Wisconsin in the west. Today it holds one state in the entire north, Rhode Island.

"This is the result of Bryanism on the fortunes of the democratic party. Fortunately times have changed. The democratic party in nearly all its state conventions has repudiated populism, Bryanism and silverism and the party has come back to itself."

The fact is that the populist movement has been of great benefit to the democratic party and to the country. It helped to save the democratic party from annihilation and it helped to teach economic truths to republicans who would not listen to democratic speakers. In 1888 the republican party had a large majority in nearly all the western states. The farmers' alliance, which was the nucleus of the populist party, did more in a few years to break the ranks of the republican party than democratic speakers and editors had been able to do in a generation, and this education has not been lost. The retrograde movement that has been observed in the west is due partly to the improved conditions, which some former republicans have credited to republican policies, and partly to the fact that the metropolitan dailies have constantly declared that the democratic party was returning to the position that it occupied prior to 1896. The republicans who left their party between 1888 and 1898 hate Clevelandism as much as they did the things that drove them out of the republican party; the fear of the party's return to Clevelandism has had even more to do with the falling off in democratic votes in the west than industrial conditions.

The Star, in the editorial above referred to, like all the exponents of reorganization, either ignorantly or wilfully misstates the facts. The position taken by the democratic party on the money question could not be truthfully described as a "populist-silver craze." The silver plank of the Chicago platform was in line with the action of the party for twenty years. Time and again the democrats in congress had voted almost solidly for free and unlimited coinage at the ratio of 16 to 1 without waiting for the aid or consent of any other nation. In fact, this proposition never failed to command a majority of the democratic votes in both house and senate until Mr.